

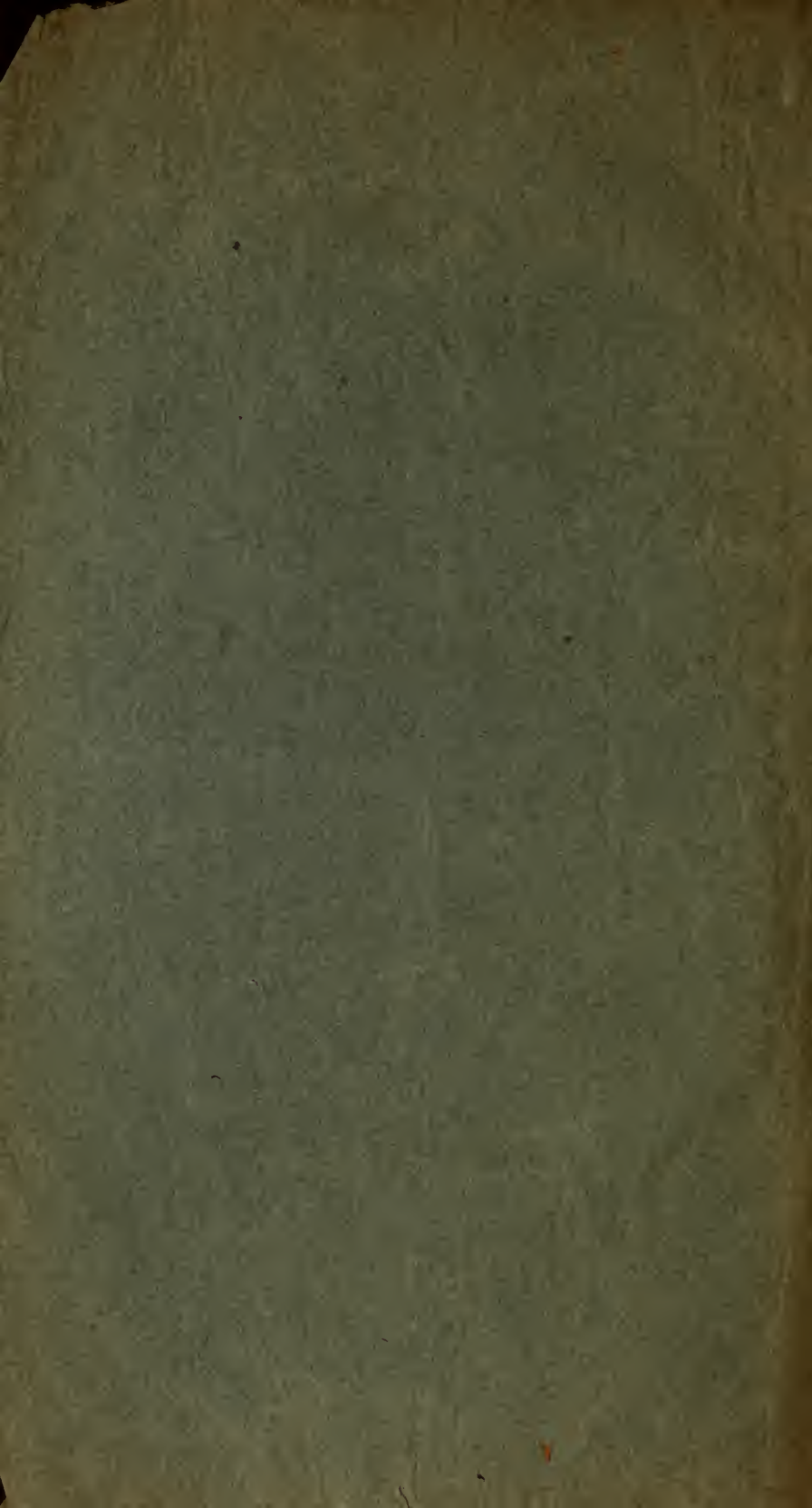
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AN



ADDRESS ON MUSIC,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE SINGING SOCIETY

OF THE

SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH IN BOSTON,

ON THE EVENING OF THE 7th APRIL, 1914.

..... ✓

BY JAMES M. WINCHELL.

.....



BOSTON : PRINTED BY MANNING AND LORING.

BOSTON, APRIL 11, 1814.

SIR,

THE Singing Society of the Second Baptist Church have appointed us a committee to wait on you, to present to you the thanks of the Society for your highly approved Address, delivered before them on the evening of their Exhibition of Sacred Music, and to request a copy for the press.

We are, dear Sir, with much esteem,
Yours, &c.

JOSEPH BAILEY,
JONATHAN LORING,
WILLIAM LEARNED.

Rev. Mr. Winchell.

ADDRESS ON MUSIC.

THE occasion upon which we are assembled is truly interesting. It is to cherish in our bosoms a desire for improvement in the pleasing and important art of music.

The performances which have already been exhibited have afforded us pleasure, and engaged our attention. Our minds are now naturally left to seek relief by pursuing a different train of thought.

Under such circumstances, it is with peculiar embarrassment the speaker rises to address you. Conscious of his inability to meet your expectations, he is compelled to seek a shelter under the indulgence of his hearers.

To most of you, I am persuaded no apology is necessary. You well know that it is no ordinary providence that has called me to the discharge of this duty. I am but the feeble representative of the man, who would have dignified this occasion with his ability, no less than his eloquence.

Alas ! how uncertain are all human prospects ! The time was fixed—the speaker engaged—the intelligence given ; but in a moment, the scene is changed ! The hand of death snatches from time the man, whose ready mind and glowing heart shone with a lustre through the language of his lips. The friend of science—the patron of music—the champion of eloquence—

WATERMAN is no more !* Sudden death has hurried him to the grave. There, cold and lifeless, is the heart that just now was the seat of friendship. His countenance no more beams with intelligence ; no more do his lips move with persuasive accents the tear of affection ; no more do they kindle the emotions of transport. He sleeps in death ! You strive in vain to wake him with the melody of sounds. His dirge is all that you can now attempt ; his dirge alone may benefit the living. Pay this last tribute of respect to the memory of your deceased friend—Strike the mournful sound of wo !!.....[The choir, (as these words were pronounced) without rising, sung the following appropriate dirge, set by Handel : “ *Few are our days,*” &c.]

* * * * *

But we cannot tarry to make reflections upon the dead. With slow and solemn step, let us advance to the concern before us. We must endeavour to direct our thoughts in a different train. For although the art of music, to which we are now to attend, may be made to express the solemn, it may also express the cheerful emotions. I therefore proceed to the subject for which we are assembled.

That I should enter into a lengthy discussion of the nature and powers of music, cannot be expected at this time. A cursory view only of the subject, to show that it is not altogether unworthy our notice, is all that will be attempted.

Every science demands our attention, in proportion to its utility and importance. Music, both as a sci-

* The Rev. Mr. WATERMAN died on the 23d of March. The time for the exhibition had been appointed, and public notice given that he was to deliver an Address. After this late period, the author was solicited to officiate in his stead ; and, in the midst of numerous avocations, he prepared what is now presented to the view of a candid public.

ence and an art, holds no inferior station in the sources of human happiness. Knowledge of every description, whether civil, religious, or political, is sought with eagerness. Reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, and eloquence; these are thought almost indispensably necessary to a tolerable reception in society; and why should not Music hold a rank equally important with the rest?

Music is not, as too many suppose, the offspring of a heated imagination: it does not grow out of the wild fancies of extravagance and folly: it is not the product of chance, nor the result of artificial signs and rules of man's invention. It claims a nobler origin; an origin as antiquated as the principles of sensation, reflection, and memory.

The vulgar idea of music is, that the octave, the semitones, the flats and sharps, were at the first established by authority, or mutual agreement, and have from thence universally obtained. Nothing can be more erroneous. For although the ingenuity of man may have reduced the science of music to certain first principles, yet these first principles are as really found to exist in nature, as Sir Isaac Newton's three great laws of motion. Are the laws of motion the foundation of the complicated science of philosophy? so are the simple principles of music the foundation of the various combinations of sound, of concord and of harmony.

Was it ever supposed that the result of any two numbers in arithmetic, or the relation of a verb to a substantive in grammar, was established by authority? Is not the result of the former and the relation of the latter found to exist independent of all authority? In like manner all the artificial signs of music are de-

signed to express the principle previously ascertained to exist. If a knowledge of the English language is facilitated by the rules of Grammar, why may not assistance be afforded by Art in obtaining a knowledge of music? The Gamut is to music, what Grammar is to language. Both are capable of improvement, in proportion as light is thrown upon the several sciences. A history of the progress of music would afford us many striking illustrations of this statement. The genius of Handel and Giardini forms as distinguished a period in the province of music, as that of Walker, Sheridan and Johnson in the province of letters.

Can any person tell why the semitones and octaves should occur exactly at the same distance from each other, in all cases? Or can any reason be assigned why a certain distance of sound should produce a discord, while another certain distance of sound produces a concord, unless it be that the principle exists in nature?*

The elements of music are therefore inherent in the constitution of the universe, and are inseparable from its existence. For if it is only by the agitation of the surrounding atmosphere, that the ^{ear} ~~eye~~ is affected by the power of sounds, must not the quality of these sounds be regulated by the different arrangement of the various particles of the air? and consequently must not the air itself possess those established laws, upon which are founded all the varieties of semitones and octaves, of concords and discords?†

* This is to be understood of the different sounds as they occur, without the variations that may be given by flats and sharps.

† The author knows not whether these thoughts have ever before been brought into connexion with the power of sounds; but he is unable otherwise to account for the different effects produced by the different modifications of the air. If the

To ask, therefore, why there should exist such a principle as the power of sounds, is to ask, why there should be an order in the works of creation? why all bodies should possess the power of attraction, of gravitation and cohesion? The voice of nature is the voice of melody and praise; and the laws of nature is but another name for harmony itself. No human ingenuity can equal the exact symmetry discovered in the formation of the human body. The air we breathe, as well as the earth we tread, is made up of various properties, combined to answer the purposes of life: and who knows but that the harmony of nature may be to the Almighty what the harmony of sounds is to us? Who can tell but that, to spiritual intelligences, the silent accents of order may be as powerful as audible sounds to corporeal?

“The morning stars that sang together” in the beginning, were waked by the harmonious arrangement of all the *works* of God. And certain it is, that the orderly movement of the planetary system, the earth, sun, moon, and stars, each possessing different properties of magnitude, gravitation, and attraction, each turning on their several axes, each revolving round their several centres, and the whole re-revolving round one common centre,—swell the mind with notes of praise, equalled only by those when “all the *sons* of God shouted for joy.”

sound of a Viol has a different effect upon the organ of hearing from that of a Piano, why should not the particles of air possess a certain adaptation to each other, to produce an agreeable effect in unison? If it should be said, that the agreeable and disagreeable of sounds exist in the mind, still it may be asked—Why, (seeing it is through the medium of the air that it is communicated) should the union of two sounds be agreeable, and the union of two other sounds be disagreeable? A developement of this subject would be a desideratum in the science of music. It is certainly a subject, which presents a field for much curious speculation.

It is natural here to observe the wisdom of our Creator, in adapting our faculties to the various objects with which we are surrounded.

There are but three mediums through which we derive all our happiness ; the sensual, the organic, and the intellectual. The sensual is that which we receive through the faculties of touching, tasting and smelling ; the organic, that of the eye and ear ; the intellectual, that of the reflections of our own minds.—The organic pleasures are superior to the sensual, and the intellectual superior to the organic.

With the sensitive part of our nature, music, as far as we are acquainted, has no concern ; and it holds connexion with the intellectual only through the medium of the eye and ear. The organic pleasures, therefore, holding a middle rank between the sensual and intellectual, elevate us as much above the former as they leave us below the latter.*

With the eye, we discover the silent language of order, which is exhibited in the works of creation, and is always productive of pleasure to the mind. This principle we call in to the aid of beauty, painting, architecture, and gardening. In this manner also we can cast an eye over a stave, on which musick is written, and derive a pleasure from the same, without uttering a single sound.

The ear, however, is the principal organ concerned with the power of musick. With this we communicate a pleasure to the mind, by attending to the beauties of melody and harmony when waked into audible sounds. The first step above the silent language of order addresses itself to the ear ; and although pleas-

* See Kaime's Introduction to the Elements of Criticism.

urable emotions may be raised in distinction from the faculty of seeing, yet that effect is the most powerful which is produced by the union of these two faculties. A proper modulation of the human voice, therefore, accompanied by appropriate looks and gestures, may be considered the highest source of organic pleasures.

The heart of man is formed to be animated and warmed by man. Here nature speaks with a language intelligible to all. That sympathy of sound, which brings in unison the emotions of the soul, more irresistible than hostile fleets and armies, seizes the man of vengeance, disarms him of his fury, and clothes him with mildness—or infuses into timidity and weakness the courage of a warrior, and urges him forward to brave the dangers of the field of battle.

Instrumental music of the simplest kind must be founded upon the principles of vocal.* The lyre and the organ were in the earliest ages brought to the assistance of the human voice.† In the ancient republics of Greece, the lyres of Orpheus and Amphion possessed a power inferior only to the eloquence of Demosthenes; or, to use the figurative language of their poets, at the sound of their harps, the wild beasts laid aside their ferocity, the rivulets stopped in their courses, and the trees of the forest received the power of feeling and motion.

Nor is it among the heathen nations alone that we are to look for an attention to music. Have you forgotten that Jubal was the father of all such as handled

* “Instrumental music is never introduced, till vocal has gained a considerable degree of perfection. Instruments are designed to imitate the voice: the extent, tones, and modulation of the voice must therefore be known, before they can be imitated. The most rude and uncultivated savages are not without their songs, though destitute of musical instruments.” See Hubbard’s *Essay on Music*, page 4.

the harp and the organ in the antediluvian world? * Need I rehearse the songs of Moses and the children of Israel on the banks of deliverance ; or wake the ancient harp of David on the hill of Zion ? There is not a nation on earth but has felt its power and yielded to its influence.

Hitherto we have spoken of music as it exists in nature, independently of the improvements of art. It is suitable that we should now speak of some of its different properties, and the advantages that may be derived from it.

A simple series of sounds, expressive of the genuine feelings of the heart, is called melody. Such is the music of untutored nature, where the emotions of joy or grief are expressed without restraint. Such also is the plaintive melody of the feathered songsters of the grove. Its effects are alike produced by the perfect chorister, whose voice can wake the dormant faculties of the soul ; and by the tender mother, who lulls to sleep the infant of her bosom.

The union of two sounds, placed at such a distance as to make an agreeable impression, is properly called a concord. A number of these concordant sounds is appropriately termed harmony. Upon these principles are founded all the varieties of music.

A mixed emotion, and perhaps a devotional frame of mind, may be raised by the assistance of harmony ; but to impress an important sentiment, or to awaken a soft and delicate passion, the simple melody is the most effectual. Hence the frequent use of solos by the most admired authors of music. The mind, enraptured with the sublime chorusses of a full band, is

* Gen. iv. 21.

soon dazzled with its elevation, and seeks for relief by lighting on the simple strains of melody.

Great effects may be produced by passing alternately from harmony to melody in the same piece. Like the tranquillity of mind produced by the calm which succeeds a tempest, the heart is softened and impressed with a well adapted solo, after the elevation of a variety of parts. An advantage may also be taken of discords, to render the effect of concords more pleasing.*

Music receives an additional power from its connexion with words. The force of language, combined with appropriate sounds, has an effect superior to either when taken separately. The sentiments of the heart are naturally expressed in language suited to their general character. Hence the orator, who with the effusions of his heart unites the greatest harmony of periods, will make the deepest impression upon his hearers ; and metrical compositions produce an effect superior to those in prose, only by virtue of their connexion with the power of music. The mind, transported with the glories of creation, or with the perfections of the Redeemer, pours forth its emotions in the impassioned strains of poetic melody. The most unexampled performances in the province of letters

* "As in painting, the brilliancy of colouring is happily set off by an appropriate shade, so an occasional discord gives to harmony a more exquisite sweetness. And on a principle somewhat similar, the expression of a single part is greatly augmented if placed in contrast with the harmony of a full chorus. The transition relieves the mind, and gives a new spring to the attention. Moreover, in pieces of the dramatic kind, a composer not unfrequently finds it necessary to give a general *concertus*, to represent a multitude as uniting their voices to give utterance to a common emotion."†

† See Brown's Essay on Music, p. 10.

were chiefly delivered in poetic numbers. I refer to the Psalms of David, that sweet singer of Israel.*

It is easy to discover, that in this connexion music will characterize the prevailing disposition as well as the morals of any nation. Is a people naturally gay and sprightly? You will see it in their music. Are they cold and phlegmatic? You will see it in their music. This is evident also from the individuals to whom we may recur within the circle of our acquaintance. We seldom find an accurate musician, without finding a correspondent mildness of temper and disposition. Such was doubtless the meaning of those expressions, made use of to show the effect produced upon the temper and manners of the Grecians by the music of Orpheus. And it is certain that the politeness, humanity and hospitality of the Arcadians, so much celebrated in ancient history, was principally the fruit of their attention to the art of music; while their Cynethian neighbours, neglecting this and the fine arts, with which it is connected, became "so fierce and savage, that no city in Greece was so remarkable for frequent and great enormities."†

Is it not of importance, therefore, that the youth especially, who are forming their tempers as well as their morals, should pay suitable attention to this delightful branch of education? And is it not as much an abuse of the mercies of God, to treat with contempt

* "The song of Moses was written in poetry, undoubtedly for the purpose of being sung by the choirs of Israelites." Hubbard's Essay, page 4.

† See Polybius, lib. iv. chap. 3. and Kaime's Elements of Criticism, chap. ii, part i. sect. 2.

this important source of happiness, as any other of his benevolent institutions?*

I come now to speak of the advantages of music when applied to the sacred duties of devotion. By the universal consent of all nations, it has been considered an essential part of divine service. I do not wish to apologize for the abuse of this principle by the Pagan world in honouring their impure deities. Its noblest effects are found among the worshippers of the true God. The Saviour of men did not hesitate to join with his disciples in singing a divine hymn on the most solemn and interesting occasion. And in after days, those same disciples continued to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs in the churches of Jesus Christ. Hence the worshippers of the Son of God in all ages have united their hearts with their voices in making melody unto the Lord.

The Zion of God is the perfection of beauty : it is the mountain of holiness, the temple of virtue, inhabited by the sons and daughters of the Most High. Can any place be more suitable for harmony and praise? Can any choir be more honourable? any subject more exalted? any emotions more pure? Here every circumstance, that can add to the perfection of music, exists in its full strength. Is grandeur and sublimity

* Although the principles of music are furnished by nature, yet to be able to convert them to practical uses, is the work of art. Culture is no less necessary to a good musician than to a correct mathematician : an inattention to either, in the season for improvement, may render all after efforts ineffectual ; more especially so in music, where all the beauty of the performance depends upon the ability to modulate the voice. This ability is best obtained in youth, while the voice is yet forming. Very few persons, who have arrived at the meridian of life, have been able to make themselves even tolerable performers in vocal music ; while very many have reflected with much regret upon their misimprovement of that season, when their voices might have been cultivated. This fact should excite a desire in the breasts of all, who still have it in their power, to improve their voices while they are young.

necessary? What grandeur can equal the perfections and works of the Deity, unfolded to the view of the believer? Is strength of affection and friendship necessary? What affection, what friendship can equal that of the compassionate Redeemer? Are emotions of joy and transport necessary? What emotions can equal the animation of believers "raised up," and made "to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" Hence we find that most of those, who have excelled in the sublime and beautiful in music, have chosen to draw their subjects from the treasures of divine revelation.

It is a question much agitated by critics, whether harmony, the performance of different parts in unison, has a tendency to increase or diminish the effects of music. It is said, that to multiply the parts is to divide the attention, so as to prevent the impression of any one important sentiment. And if we were to examine the pieces of *some* of our American authors as a standard, we should find that this statement is too true.* *They* have not only directed a number of *parts* and *sounds*, but also of *words*, to be performed at the same time. In one instance at least, the four parts of quite a celebrated tune, are pronouncing at the same time the principal part of four different lines in the same verse. This is certainly a play of words and a corruption of music, to the disgrace of its solid beauties.†

* I say *some*, for there are so many excellent pieces of American composition, that it would be unjust to censure without discrimination. Good music needs no apology; it speaks for itself; and the more it is examined, the more will its beauties be discovered. When the taste for such pieces shall become established in this country, they will not fail to procure "the meed of praise" for their authors.

† See Hubbard's Essay on Music. These observations are intended to apply principally to the music adapted to the solemnities of public worship. The beauty of music consists in its being suited to the occasion. If we are displeased with a levity in the pulpit, when engaged in the worship of God, why should we allow it in that which constitutes an essential part of worship? Music admits of as great

But still I think that in the worship of the sanctuary we may have a harmony of parts, which shall greatly add to the solemnities of devotion. To produce any lasting impression upon the mind with simple melody, requires a greater skill of performance than the generality of singers possess. But by the variety of voices in different parts, the same effect may be produced, although the performance be not so accurate; and the God of nature, who calls for the homage of all our hearts, seems to have bestowed this variety of voices, that all may bear a part in the worship of their Creator. —What an elevation of soul is produced by the performance of sacred music adapted to the solemnity of the occasion! What greater resemblance can exist between the inhabitants of heaven and earth, than when with united voices they ascribe praise and glory to “Him who sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb!”

I cannot relinquish your attention, without remarking the mixture of satisfaction and regret with which I listen to the performances of this evening. Of *satisfaction*, that the style of music introduced is so much superior to that which has prevailed in New-England for years past; of *regret*, that the same style should not be more universally introduced. I will not now des-

a variety as public speaking, and in the duties of the sanctuary they should go hand in hand. It begins to be seen and acknowledged, that most of the tunes, which have been sung in the churches of New-England, are too trifling for devotional purposes. The solid beauties of music are beginning to be introduced, and that corruption of taste, for which we have been so justly censured, is gradually declining.

With respect to fuges, they are admissible in anthems and chorusses more than in simple pieces designed for the sanctuary. If they are frequent in European music, it is principally in that of the first description, and very few or none of the tunes in common use are made up of fuges, like that referred to in the example above mentioned, and many others that might be produced. Those, who may wish to see that example and a specimen of correct fugging, may find them in Hubbard's criticism on the tune called Montague, in his Essay on Music, delivered before the Middlesex Musical Society, Sept. 1807. Sold by Manning & Loring.

cant upon that unmeaning jargon of sounds, which has taken the place of solid music in the worship of the sanctuary. I sincerely hope, that the noble efforts of this society and others in this town to introduce the beauties of psalmody, will be crowned with success, and imitated by the surrounding towns and states.

The style of sacred music should be adapted to the sentiments it is designed to express. The heart enraptured with true devotion will naturally, with Handel in his Chorus of the Messiah, "*Break forth into joy and gladness.*" And what sentiments did the style of Giardini express in the words, "*And on the wings of every hour we read thy patience still,*" but those of holy gratitude and love? What in the words, "*Father, how wide thy glories shine;*" and then in these, "*But when we view thy great designs,*" &c.; what, I say, did the style of his music convey, but the most exalted ideas of the grandeur and the glory of God?

If, melted into tenderness by the love of Jesus, and taught by his Spirit, we are enabled here to express the gratitude of our hearts, we shall hereafter be admitted to the full choir of celestial spirits, where all our emotions will be love, and all our work praise. Soon we shall cease to sing with mortal that we may use immortal tongues. Let us then with our voices endeavour also to cultivate our hearts. Let us strive to imitate the heavenly company in purity of feeling as well as harmony of sounds; that in the closing scene of time we may be found among "*the ransomed of the Lord, who shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; who shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*"

